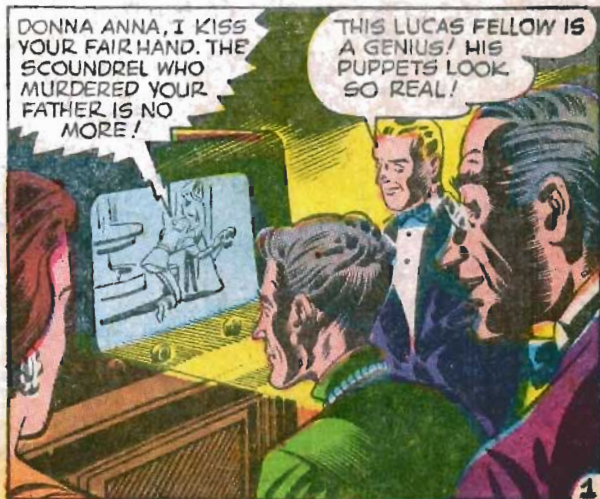


The PHANTOM PUPPET

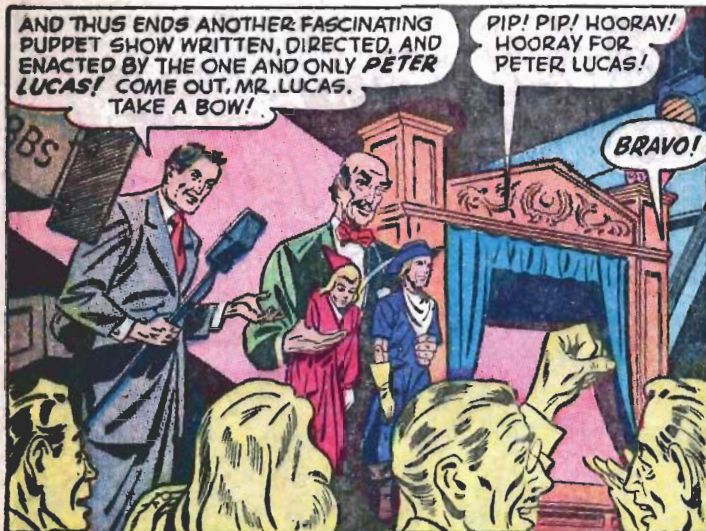


PETER LUCAS, THE FAMOUS PUPPET-MASTER, COULD MAKE HIS PUPPETS DO EVERYTHING BUT BREATHE. IN FACT, HIS PUPPETRY HAD REACHED SUCH A PINNACLE OF ART THAT ONLY LIFE ITSELF REMAINED UNATTAINABLE. OR WAS IT? LUCAS GOT THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION IN BLOOD-CURLING ACCENTS! NOR WAS THERE ANY RETREAT FROM THE HORROR HIS VANITY HAD LOOSED ON LONDON AND ON HIMSELF!

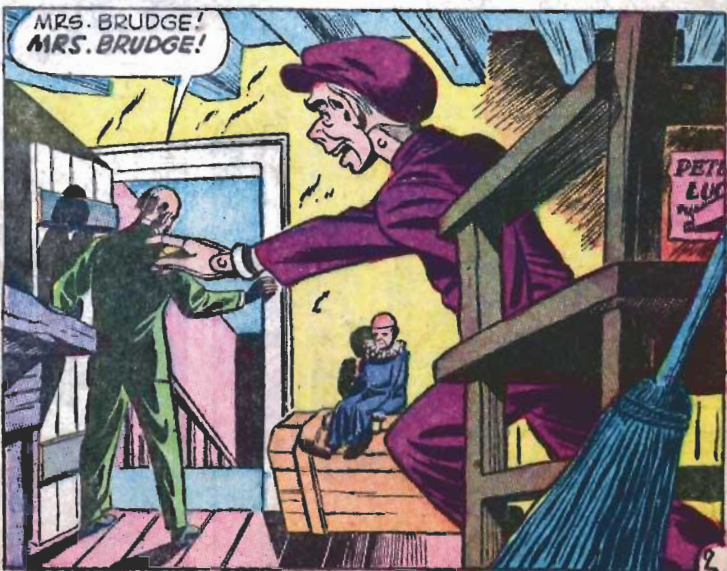


DONNA ANNA, I KISS YOUR FAIR HAND. THE SCOUNDREL WHO MURDERED YOUR FATHER IS NO MORE!

THIS LUCAS FELLOW IS A GENIUS! HIS PUPPETS LOOK SO REAL!



LATER, WHEN LUCAS REACHED HIS LONDON FLAT...





WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY MONKEYING AROUND WITH MY PUPPETS! I TOLD YOU A MILLION TIMES **NOBODY** IS TO COME UP HERE!

BUT I DIDN'T GO UPSTAIRS, MR. LUCAS! DON'T YOU REMEMBER? YOU EVEN CHANGED THE LOCK ON YOUR DOOR. NOBODY BUT YOU HAS THE KEY!



T. THAT'S TRUE! AND YET SOMEBODY MUST HAVE MOVED THE PUPPET!



(GASP!) GOOD HEAVENS! NOW HE'S ON THE WORKTABLE AGAIN! D-DID I JUST IMAGINE HE WAS ON THE CHAIR? W-WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?



IT MUST BE OVERWORK--NERVOUSNESS! I--I SEE THINGS THAT AREN'T THERE. I WANT THIS PUPPET TO BE MY MASTERPIECE. TO BE ALMOST HUMAN... A DIMINUTIVE MORTAL!



IN THIS PUPPET I WANT TO REINCARNATE THE SOUL OF ENGLAND'S MOST INFAMOUS MURDERER-- JACK THE RIPPER! HE MUST BE SO PERFECTLY CONSTRUCTED THAT HE'LL ALMOST HAVE A SOUL OF HIS OWN! HE MUST SHOCK THOSE SCOTLAND YARD BOYS AT THE BENEFIT!



YEOWWW! MY LEG!



THE PUPPET-- HE STABBED ME WITH THE SCISSORS! BUT HOW COULD HE? UNLESS--YES, IT'S THE ONLY WAY! I MUST'VE TOUCHED SOME WIRES AND BROUGHT ABOUT A MECHANICAL REFLEX!

I COULD SWEAR THERE'S A GLEAM OF SATISFACTION IN HIS GLASS EYES. A MALEVOLENCE IN HIS EXPRESSION-- AS IF HE ENJOYED STABBING ME! YES, THIS JACK THE RIPPER PUPPET WILL BE MY MASTERPIECE! HE WILL BE AS CLOSE TO HUMAN AS WOOD, PAINT, AND WIRE CAN GET!



Tonight!!
BENEFIT
for
Retired
Patrolmen of
Scotland Yard
featuring
the GREAT LUCAS
AND HIS PUPPETS

GENTLEMEN OF SCOTLAND YARD, THE MAIN ATTRACTION OF MY SHOW TONIGHT IS A CHARACTER WELL-KNOWN TO YOU! THE ONLY CRIMINAL WHO EVER ELUDED YOUR IRON CLUTCH! THAT DASTARDLY, MANIACAL KILLER-- THE ONE AND ONLY **JACK THE RIPPER!**

HA-HA! HE'S CUTE!

LET'S SEE HIM IN ACTION!

MARVELOUS!



YOU ASKED FOR ACTION AND YOU'RE GOING TO GET IT! I WILL SHOW YOU TONIGHT HOW JACK THE RIPPER ACCOMPLISHED SOME OF HIS MOST HEINOUS MURDERS! AND NOW JACK THE RIPPER SPEAKS FOR HIMSELF!



AH! A PRETTY, UNESCORTED MAIDEN, WITH A SLENDER WHITE THROAT! PREPARE TO DIE, MY PRETTY! FOR YOU HAVE COME FACE TO FACE WITH **JACK THE RIPPER!**



ALL MUST PERISH! YOUNG AND OLD!

THE STRONG MAN CANNOT PROTECT HIMSELF!

NOR CAN THE SPECTACLE OF BEAUTY STAY MY HAND... THE HAND OF A MASTER CRIMINAL WHO LOVES ONLY DEATH!

ENOUGH! THIS IS IN BAD TASTE! THE MAN MOCKS US!

LUCAS MUST BE MENTALLY SICK TO PUT ON A PERFORMANCE LIKE THIS!



THE PUPPET IS MOVING WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF MY WIRE-PULLING! THOSE ARE HIS WORDS, NOT MINE! HE'S GONE BERSERK- ON HIS OWN!

NOBODY CAN CATCH ME! I'M TOO CLEVER!

TAKE HIM OFF!

THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND I'M ALIVE, EH, PUPPET-MAKER? BUT WE SHALL KEEP THE PRETENSE GOING! WE SHALL PRETEND ONCE MORE THAT YOU CONTROL ME!

(GASP!) H-HE'S TALKING TO ME! HE-- HE'S ALIVE!

STOP THE SHOW!

MOMENTS LATER...

I BEG YOUR PARDON FOR ANY OFFENSE I MAY HAVE GIVEN. AFTER A BRIEF INTERMISSION WE WILL CONTINUE WITH THE ROMANCE OF ROMEO AND JULIET!

THAT'S MUCH BETTER! FOR A MOMENT, LUCAS, WE THOUGHT YOU HAD LOST YOUR MIND!

TWO HOURS LATER, IN LUCAS' DRESSING ROOM...

IT'S A DEFINITE PARANOIC TENDENCY. IT COMES OVER MANY ARTISTS. THE DESIRE TO WIELD RUTHLESS POWER. THAT'S WHAT MAY HAVE MOTIVATED THAT PERFORMANCE...

THEY THINK YOUR MIND'S SNAPPED, LUCAS-- THAT YOU'RE CARRYING YOUR CONTROL OVER PUPPETS TO INSANE LENGTHS! BE WE KNOW THE TRUTH, EH? HEH, HEH!

AN HOUR LATER, IN LUCAS' WORKSHOP...

NOW I'M GOING TO TAKE YOU APART, PIECE BY PIECE, AND SEE WHERE I MADE MY MISTAKE! I KNOW I'M NOT CRAZY, AND YET YOU SEEM TO HAVE A LIFE OF YOUR OWN!

FOOL! YOU PUT THE SOUL OF JACK THE RIPPER INTO MY WOODEN HEART, AND I SHALL NOT REST UNTIL I HAVE KILLED IN REALITY!

OH!!! YOU MURDERING LITTLE DEVIL! Y-YOU'VE STABBED ME!

FOR YEARS YOU LORDED IT OVER US PUPPETS, MAKING US DANCE AND SING-LAUGH AND CRY- AS YOU PULLED THE WIRES! BUT NOW I'LL PULL A FEW TRICKS OF MY OWN!

COME BACK, YOU LITTLE MONSTER!

FROM TONIGHT FORWARD, AT THE SCENE OF EVERY JACK THE RIPPER MURDER, ANOTHER CORPSE WILL BE FOUND, VICTIMS OF THE PUPPET YOU BROUGHT TO LIFE!



